

Thus spake Saint Vādirāja Tīrtha.

(1480-1600 A.D.)

कापिकट कंधुरीणः कार्मुकन्यस्त वाजः सपितदितिसौवः क्षमिमेषु  
जनान्वयोनितसे तु जीव की तोष है; जीव परि युगलाक्षः पत्र मा रामानुजः  
3 ग्रन्थाण्यः  
Introductory  
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Kumbhāsi, a small village on the Udupi-Boodapur Road, famous as one of the seven pilgrim-centres in Parashurāma Kshetra, was the birthplace of this literary Saint. He lived for 120 years spreading the message of Sri Madhvacharya, whom he called his Rājā or King - ऋषी महो दर्शन राजा - in the opening verses in his commentary on the latter's Mahābhārata Tatparya Nirnaya (Verse 4, page 8, Udupi Majestic Press Edition of 1952). Sri Madhva had arranged that the worship of Sri Krishna in Udupi should go by rotation among his eight disciples each officiating for only two months. This period of two months was felt to be too short by this Saint, who decided that the period should be two years thereafter. The temple itself was enlarged by the addition of two images, - that of Garuda (brought from Ayodhya) and Mukhyaprāna on the two sides of the main image of Sri Krishna and the image of Sri Hayagreeva whose image was worshipped daily by him. Even granting that his religious activities started in 1500 AD in his 20<sup>th</sup> year (though there are evidences to prove that he began to compose poems even in his teens) we can see for ourselves that his cultural activities continued unabated for full hundred years.

The period of his apprenticeship might have started about 1475 A.D soon after his initiation by his Ashramaguru Vāgisha Tīrtha. Perhaps his very first literary work seems to have been his Tīrtha Prabandha, which commemorates his worship at the various shrines he visited. This small work, in four sections corresponding to the holy pilgrimage centres in the four quarters, consists of 240 verses and can be, if properly edited, a Pilgrim's guide to all Mādhwas in particular. Even in this very early age, when he might have been barely 20 or so, the literary level he has exhibited is of a very high order. The poetic ~~compositions~~ flight of his imagination are soaring very high and the jingling assurance of the words used in his poem is simply admirable and one is tempted to declare that such Anuprāsas (alliterations) are unrivalled in the whole range of Sanskrit literature. In this opening chapter, we quote some of such attractive words and invite the readers to enjoy the music of the verses.

Badrī, the sacred place where Sri Kedākyā  
one of the famous Chirājiris, is practising penance  
even today (up on the Himalayan Mountain) is thus described—

असरी असरी पुष्टे कुम्भानि देवता ।  
असरी असरी पुष्टे कुम्भानि देवता ॥ ३८१ ॥ ३८२ ॥ ४१  
Though I may not be able to bring out this beauty in my prosaic translation, I crave the indulgence of the reader and present my translation for what it is worth. This Badrī, which is decorated by the holy rays emanating from the celestial female bees (hovering round the flowers there)—which place does it not make inferior by its side (it makes every other place lose its sanctity). Comment is needless.

The river Trungā is thus described - तुङ्ग - १.

तुङ्गं विकसते रुद्रं अधैरभग्नं हरिपादसंगमः  
अनोदसि भद्रं हृतपापनिश्च विमुक्तिपद्यं विमले कसाध्यम्

I resort to the river Trungā with its shining wave,  
the river which destroys hoards of sins, the river that  
flows at the foot of Lord Hari.  
The other Bhadra river dispels the sin of Kidaarshey,  
It is a high road to Muktī and reachable only by the pen  
The alliteration in तुङ्ग, रुद्र, भद्र, and संग in the first  
line can be compared only to the similar juggling word  
शत्रुघ्न, विश्वा; in the latter half of the second line तुङ्ग अल्पिकास  
with शत्रुघ्न.

The lake गीत caught the imagination of our Saint  
to such an extent that he must have gazed long at  
it, repeating its name too many times, and reversing it  
he said पापं; the lake, according to him, makes पापा or  
पाप in us अवेक्षयन्ति, hold its head down in shame.  
The lake confers prosperity on those who resort to  
it, it is संपत्करी and dispels all the sins of those  
who bathe therein. Let us now hear what the saint  
himself has to say:

पम्या सम्पत्करी सूर्य कि पापं न हुरेण्हात् ।  
या लोमुखी करोत्पेव त न्नामो ऋषणमात्र त. ॥ २५ ॥  
In this same Purva Prabandha 37<sup>th</sup> Verse,  
the God Shiva enshrined on Tiruvannamalai Hill  
is described thus :  
पापिगामवरप्रवः पापं तीक्ष्णप्रवः रवकजनकुतरोः ।  
रविष्टितात्मीयदोषः ।  
सदूरणीरिगसः शक्तस्त्वर्णादीदः परिहृतमवादः ।

पापु मि पापतीर्ती ।  
May That Lord of Parvat, decking Himself with a host  
of serpents, lovelier still by the body of Pārvati imbedded  
with His own (on the left side), who gets angry with the  
wicked and who has (mercilessly) cut away all  
His own defects, That God who dwells on the sacred Hill,

that lord who is the overlord of Shakra (Indra) Surya  
and others, that Lord again who removes the shackles  
of Samsara of births and deaths - protect us!

The Lord Padmanabha in Anantashayana  
in Trivandrum is worshipped in the last (45<sup>th</sup>) verse  
in the last Dakshina Prabanda in the following mellifluous Verse:

सुरगणपरिवारः ओममानोऽहारः

करिकरसमहसः काञ्जनोदीषवस्तः ।

इ॒मंजनकृतगानः इ॒ष्मोगे इयानः

प्रग्नः अ॒यमविद्या शः प्री॒गतामि॒द्यैर्शः ॥

It is but fitting that this lovely Pilgrimage  
should end with the clarion call that Vishnu  
or Padmanabha is the supreme God as taught  
by his Guru Sriyan Madhvacharya. The verse  
may be rendered thus: May that Supreme Lord, with  
his retinue of heavenly Gods with a large pearlneck  
lace (perhaps from Tamraparni <sup>near by</sup>) decking His  
body, possessed of hands similar to the elephants  
trunk, wearing clothes of yellow golden tints, sung  
or praised by the meritorious, and sleeping on the  
hood of the Serpent Adishesha, He that has no destruction  
and who is the Lord of Indra or Supreme Lakshmi,  
let him be pleased (with my work) Tirtha Prabanda.

I would also prefer to conclude my brief  
note introducing the Saint at this point, but the  
next Stoka, also at the very end of this lyric, sums  
up the excellences of the verses admirably.

बालूत्तं स्वाच्छक्षमपरित्यज्य ऋच्चमाणमयुक्ता  
शब्दालंकारवद्दं इमलकुलैर्लालीयान्हृत्यम्

श्रीनाथप्रीतिरूपोः हृष्वपनकुपामोदेसंभृतरत्नम्

प्रकृतीरूपवद्दं वह्नुगणमरितं गतिराजो यतीद्वः

Perhaps the most difficult word इमल meaning sin need  
be translated here. If this effort of mine pleases some  
Madwas at least by holding the mirror to the Saint's  
poetic art, I would deem myself blessed.

D. K. Katakushuega